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S E C R E T CANBERRA 000121

STATE FOR NEA/I, S/I, ISN/CTR AND EAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2019

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [AS](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN QUESTION ON IRAQI WMD SCIENTIST

REF: A. 08 CANBERRA 309

[1](#)B. 07 CANBERRA 1795

[1](#)C. 07 STATE 169818

[1](#)D. 07 CANBERRA 1651

[1](#)E. 07 STATE 157364

[1](#)F. 07 CANBERRA 1217

[1](#)G. 07 STATE 84894

[1](#)H. 12/20/2007 CROWLEY-KUCHINSKY E-MAIL AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Counselor James F. Cole; reasons 1.4 (b),(d),(h).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request for ISN/CTR. Please see para 5 below.

[1](#)2. (S) Gerry McGuire, Director for Counter-Proliferation, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, called in Deputy POLCOUNS on February 4 to discuss Dr. Ali Abdulrahman Abdullah Al-Za'ag, the former biological weapon scientist during Saddam Hussein's regime whom the Department sought to place temporarily at Victoria University in Melbourne under the ISN/CTR Temporary Relocation program. The GOA had declined the U.S. request in March 2008, citing "a range of compelling security, immigration and legal reasons," as well as a separate pending humanitarian/refugee visa application (ref A).

[1](#)3. (S) According to McGuire, Al-Za'ag applied for a "Visiting Academic" visa at the Australian Embassy in Amman on January 21, 2009, seeking to work temporarily at Victoria University. His destination, contact data, academic placement and other details in the visa application corresponded closely to the arrangement earlier proposed by the United States under the Temporary Relocation program, except for the absence of details on how his placement would be financed. Because of this coincidence, McGuire explained, the Government of Australia was interested in knowing whether the U.S. had any role in Al-Za'ag's recent decision to reapply for an Australian visa. The GOA also wished to know whether the Temporary Relocation program still exists, whether Al-Za'ag remains a candidate for relocation under the program, and, regardless of the foregoing, whether the U.S. possesses and is willing to share any background information or updates on Dr. Al-Za'ag's activities and movements over the past year. This latter information would be helpful in adjudicating his most recent "Visiting Academic" visa application, McGuire told us.

[1](#)4. (S) McGuire noted that, should the GOA grant the visa, it would not regard it as establishing a precedent in regards to accepting applicants under the Temporary Relocation program. He added that Al-Za'ag's earlier humanitarian/refugee visa application, filed with the help of his son who is resident in Australia, is still pending.

[1](#)5. (C) ACTION REQUESTED: Embassy would appreciate ISN/CTR's responses to the questions in para 3 above so that we can respond to the GOA.

CLUNE